

ETCP POV: For smaller companies, ETCP certification equals a competitive edge

BY ERIC ROUSE

IN OUR LITTLE CORNER of the business, it's very possible that we are working with clients who do not know the industry and depend on us to guide them. I have spent many a phone call explaining to a client what it means to have an ETCP Certified Rigger supervising their project. Talking to that client about the process of becoming certified and the years of experience required to even sit for the exam instills a bit of confidence in a person who really has no idea who is going to show up at their dock at 8 a.m. on Monday morning. Being able to make a distinction between sending a group of workers and sending a group of workers with a qualified leader who can manage both them and the project is very important to the client.

Company and employee growth

Smaller companies typically serve niche markets. Because of that, sometimes it's hard to find new team members that are already familiar with and can immediately work within that niche. Having ETCP helps us in two ways. First, it allows us to target who may be qualified to work on our types of projects. This can be tricky as there are so many subsets of rigging, but at least it gives us a good place to start. Second, it allows us to bring in folks and train them to work within the niche as they accumulate hours towards their ETCP certification. For companies with smaller payrolls and fewer overall resources, it's especially important that every member of the team contributes, and I feel it's incumbent on the company to provide a path to facilitate that.

Working with IATSE and other labor providers nationwide

We work all over the country and deploy our supervisors to a variety of markets. Many times, when we are planning a job, we choose to hire local labor instead of sending an entire team. In those cases, we will reach out to the local IATSE Business Agent or other labor providers to request qualified technicians for the project. Depending on the job it is not uncommon for us to specifically request ETCP certified technicians. The current landscape requires job costs to be as controlled as possible, and we try very hard to minimize the amount of days onsite for the job to be as cost effective as possible.

Having ETCP certified technicians gives our supervisors the support they need to be able to multitask and get the job done in the allotted time.

Training

Anyone who knows Bill Sapsis or me knows that training is very near and dear to our hearts. We believe in it and we value it. It's a big part of what we do, and we are lucky to have traveled the world to provide training to countless different entities. But how does that help our team? Well, it keeps us out of their way, which they appreciate. It also shows them that we have a commitment to their training and growth as technicians. This is one of the more important parts of the ETCP system. The continuing education requirement puts the onus on us to be proactive and ensure that our folks are furthering their knowledge and staying sharp. Is this a bit self-serving for us? Sure. I'm not going to sit here and pretend it's all for them. The company definitely benefits from it. However, our team knows that we will always support their desire for further education, even if it ultimately means they will take that knowledge somewhere else. I have always been of the mindset that I want people to grow in their roles with us. Sometimes that means they grow out of what we can offer. That's ok. The business will be all the better for it. ■



Eric Rouse is the General Manager and owner in training of Sapsis Rigging and has worked in rigging and education for over 25 years. His favorite projects have included portions of The Sphere in Las Vegas and providing splicing training for the Cirque du Soleil tours around the world. He lives in Colorado with his partner, Joy, six kids (some in different houses), his mother-in-law, three cats, two guinea pigs, two parrots, and one dog.